LABOUR MONTHLY

A Magazine of Labour Unity

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Editor: R. Palme Dutt

Crisis and Contrast ★ R. Page Arnot

How to Fight the Tory Offensive ★ John Gollan

Does Labour Deserve Gaitskell? ★ James Klugmann

What Now in France? ★ Peter Fryer

Homes for the People— or Means Test? ★ Thomas Balmer

The Great Pioneer ★ Andrew Rothstein

The Paris Commune

March 1956

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LIGHTS AT AMBER

TO readers in Britain who may not receive their LABOUR MONTHLY by publication date—Friday, March 2—we apologise for events beyond our control. Of readers overseas, if a mail is missed, we ask patience. Any delay is due to the wage dispute between printing employers and craftsmen on which Courts of Inquiry (set up on February 15 by the Minister of Labour) are now sitting. We were not affected when the London Master Printers Association on February 15 locked-out 8,000 members of the London Typographical Society (compositors) and the Association of Correctors of the Press (proof-readers): L.M. is printed outside the London area. What affects us is the parallel dispute, involving a month-old work-to-rule, overtime ban, etc., between provincial employers in the British Federation of Master Printers (with others) and highly skilled compositors and machine minders of the Typographical Association (total membership: 51,000).

Thus, ten months after the obstinacy of the handful of Press Lords in the Newspaper Proprietors Association brought all newspapers of London's Fleet Street (except the *Daily Worker*) to a month's standstill, deep-seated trouble in the rest of the printing industry has gone near to halt all other publishing. Traffic lights at amber, about to change to Stop. During the present dispute, the public has seen provincial and suburban newspapers and periodicals stopped altogether, or resigned to appear bi-monthly; cut in size to a third; or greatly delayed. Whilst we cannot discuss the dispute here, there is one point which should be made clear. The difficulties of all publications not heavily subsidised, which we kept describing throughout last year, have increased greatly. But it is not wage claims or the present dispute which are to blame for recent price increases, close downs and mergers, of which more are in the offing. *These were decided upon well before the present dispute.* Moreover, most are due to firm and long-term policy by two giant combines in particular, which have just merged or closed down a dozen publications—while simultaneously announcing increased profits. Readers will recall earlier examples we gave of the working of monopoly, where publications have been shut down although not losing money, because they were not making *maximum* profit. Among the latest closed down is the 68-year-old weekly *Answers*, founded by Lord Northcliffe himself in 1888, which expired at the end of February. With rapidly speeding development towards monopoly stranglehold in press and publishing, there has been—in the course of a real jungle war among the giants—a serious fall in circulation for some since the previous year, of which an example is the 6 per cent loss (100,774 copies daily) by the *Daily Herald*. The national daily and evening papers went up; periodicals are going up; the provincial press is to follow. For the smaller publications it is a grim outlook. In the last few

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Notes of the Month

Crisis and Contrast

R. PAGE ARNOT*

ON Wednesday, February 15, the British press printed the announcement from Moscow of the coming seven-hour day (six hours for miners) without loss of pay and other advances. On Thursday, February 16, the British press printed the announcement in London of the bank rate raised to a crisis level of five-and-a-half per cent, with the aim of restricting credit, contracting the expansion of industry and creating unemployment. The two figures, appearing within twenty-four hours, are closely connected—by the force of contrast. They illustrate both socialism and capitalism, these two 'diametrically opposed economic systems', as it was put by Khrushchov at the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Union Communist Party (full reports of which are not available for treatment): and the one figure is typical of a society that is soaring upward, the other of a society trammelled up in the toils of its own contradictions.

*The editor will resume the Notes of the Month in the next issue.

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Towards or Away from the 'Brink of War'?

On a world scale there is yet another contrast, brought most vividly into view by the events of the last four weeks: between the handful of imperialist powers on the one side and on the other the states and peoples that are striving against imperialist domination, against colonialism and for peace. Cold war or peaceful co-existence? To continue the policy of Dulles, who in January boasted of his artistry in having thrice approached 'the brink of war'; or to develop the policy of Geneva, leading toward assured peaceful co-existence of all states, regardless of different economic systems? This is the issue facing the peoples of Britain and the United States as well as those of every other land.

A Crisis Bank Rate

This issue, too, dominates home affairs. For the continuance of cold war and colonialism has brought this stage of crisis in British economy. It has meant the monstrous sums expended on armaments, at the £1,500 million level demanded by the United States six years ago—not to speak of the extra £50 million or more which Germany cannot be persuaded to pay for the upkeep of the British Army on the Rhine. It has meant the military 'commitments' overseas, whether crack regiments sent to shoot school children in Cyprus, or to hunt resistance forces through the jungles and swamps of Malaya and Kenya. It has meant the embargo on East-West trade, the two-year conscription burden and all the other burdens of the Anglo-American alliance. It has brought not only the steep rise in prices but also loss of gold and dollar reserves resulting from the trade gap. To meet it the Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer Macmillan has raised the bank rate to $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, using the familiar device of the City of London to restrict credit and so to squeeze the smaller capitalists as well as to create unemployment. He has followed this up by raising hire-purchase minimum deposits to as much as 50 per cent, by putting a penny on the loaf and a halfpenny on each pint of milk. This from the new Chancellor, whose first public utterance a matter of weeks only ago was to express his concern to stop prices rising! In short, the effect of Tory foreign policy is the rise in prices, the cuts in housing, schools and social services. Cold war for Britain spells the impoverishment of the people. With this issue of cold war or peaceful co-existence dominating all else, questions of foreign affairs—by no means foreign to the lives and livelihood of the people—need careful examination.

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Before Washington

When on December 6 it was announced that the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary had been invited to talks at Washington at the end of January this year, it was only three weeks after the failure of the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers to reach any positive conclusions. 'The rapid call to Washington', wrote Quæstor in the January issue of *Labour Monthly*, 'can only be intended to make the temporary success of the wreckers into a jumping-off point for further developing their counter-offensive'. An essential preliminary to these plans of the sinister forces behind Dulles and their counterparts in Britain was to paper over the cracks and divisions between the two powers, divisions that were becoming difficult to conceal from public gaze. Thus, as the day of departure for Washington for Eden and his new Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd, came nearer, the actual agenda of the talks, it was revealed, would bear largely on questions of atomic information, the Far East, and above all, the Middle East. It was in the Middle East and especially in its relations with the Arab-speaking peoples that British imperialism found itself in the greatest difficulty and most anxious to reach an agreed standpoint with the U.S.A.

The Middle East

Not only was there the acute stage of the Arab-Israeli clash, with the hostilities that had flared up both between Israel and Egypt and between Israel and Syria (on which last the Security Council condemned Israel), but the political climate of the whole of Asia and Arab North Africa had been worsened for imperialism in the past year. The Bandung Conference of April 1955 had come out openly against colonialism, and had interwoven the peoples of West Asia (Israel excepted) with the peoples of the East Indies and the Far East into a fabric of friendship. Nasser of Egypt had responded to the lead given by Nehru of India, while all the peoples represented at Bandung, nearly all of them previously under colonial subjection, had been given encouragement and confidence by the speeches of Chou En-lai. This whole anti-colonialist effect of Bandung had been enormously strengthened by the November-December visit of the Soviet leaders to India, Burma and Afghanistan.

Knight Templer (In Jordan)

On the Baghdad Pact (Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, Iran and Britain) which had been the Anglo-American device for building up an anti-

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Soviet 'Northern Tier' of Middle Eastern states, British imperialism was meeting difficulties by the end of the year. On the one hand, the United States did not join the Pact. On the other hand, the visit of General Sir Gerald Templer, chief of the Imperial General Staff, to Jordan, to 'persuade' them into the Pact resulted in an upsurge of national feeling. The Prime Minister of Jordan had to resign. Another Prime Minister was appointed whose sole function was to proclaim a general election. But it was not held. The people of Jordan demonstrated against the Baghdad Pact day after day throughout the country. The Arab Legion, discontented with serving under too many British officers, could not be fully relied upon. Government after government fell until the King of Jordan chose a Prime Minister whose first statement was that under no circumstances would Jordan join the Baghdad Pact. General Templer in December had managed to spoil whatever the British Foreign Secretary had achieved at the inaugural meeting of the Council of the Baghdad Pact on November 21.

Oil in Arabia

Moreover, the Jordan fiasco had brought the countries of the Arab League closer together. Saudi Arabia, in particular, had offered several million pounds to Jordan to offset any British subsidy it might lose through its peoples' stand against the Baghdad Pact. Now, the funds of Saudi Arabia are derived almost entirely from the oil royalties paid by American oil trusts: another burning question for the British spokesmen to discuss at Washington. On the possession of the Buraimi Oasis in the south-west of the vast peninsula of Arabia, relations between Saudi Arabia and the Sultan of Muscat and Oman together with another British puppet had become embittered. British forces were in Buraimi in October. In mid-December, a British-officered force seized a key fortress in that disputed region. Strong protest was made by Saudi Arabia and repeated in very sharp terms on its wireless. In British circles the view was held that these and other forms of anti-British propaganda were being paid for by American money. Bribery too was alleged. The Washington correspondent of *The Times* on January 22 reported that 'A selection of Saudi Arabian documents captured last October by British forces in the Buraimi Oasis' (*The Times*, January 23) had been shown to the State Department in support of British allegations of bribery. He added that 'several sacks of documents' had been 'impounded by the British authorities'. Not only were

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there all these difficulties arising from the Baghdad Pact, but the main military base and headquarters for the anti-Soviet Baghdad Pact, namely the British colony of Cyprus, had become the centre of a mounting movement for independence and for unity with Greece, which movement the British have been trying to crush by draconic measures under a military governor and a greatly reinforced army of occupation. This in turn had made the Greek general election (to be held on February 19) turn largely on the question of Cyprus and had embittered the relations between Britain and Greece to an extent which put in peril the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The First Bulganin Letter

Trace the series of proposals for the relaxation of international tension and for a peaceful solution of problems put forward in the last week of January, on the eve of the Washington Conference. On January 23, N. A. Bulganin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., wrote a letter to President Eisenhower beginning:

> Being deeply convinced that you share my concern over present relations between our countries, I would like to share with you my considerations about possible ways for improving these relations.
>
> You will, of course, agree with me that the present international situation requires of all states, and in the first place the great powers that bear special responsibility for safeguarding universal peace and the security of the peoples, the adoption of measures that could help further to lessen international tension and strengthen confidence and co-operation between states.

In the course of the letter it was said:

> There can be no doubt that the peoples of the Soviet Union and the United States of America are equally interested in stopping the arms drive which compels them to expend energies and resources for unproductive purposes. The existing arms drive not only places a heavy burden of military expenditures on the shoulders of the peoples, hindering an improvement in their material wellbeing, but also greatly increases the danger of another war.

The letter recognised the existence of deep differences that would need time and effort for their solution. As an immediate step it proposed a 20-Year Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation between the U.S.S.R. and the United States. For, wrote Premier Bulganin:

> Such a treaty could provide that the parties develop and strengthen friendly relations between the peoples of the U.S.S.R. and the United States, in the spirit of sincere co-operation and mutual understanding, based on

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the principles of equality, mutual respect for state sovereignty, and non-interference in one another's domestic affairs, and could settle all their international disputes by peaceful means alone, in conformity with the United Nations Charter.

The treaty could also provide for agreement between the parties to promote the development and strengthening of economic, cultural and scientific co-operation between the U.S.S.R. and the United States, on the basis of mutual advantage and equality.

My colleagues and I believe that the conclusion of such a treaty between the Soviet Union and the United States would be an important contribution to the development of Soviet-American relations and, at the same time, would be an act of great international significance.

The Eisenhower Reply

The reply of President Eisenhower was friendly enough in tone, but unyielding in substance. He said he had examined the proposal for a 20-years treaty 'between our countries' and that

> I first observed that our countries are already bound to each other by a solemn treaty—the Charter of the United Nations. The treaty which you now propose would consist of three substantive articles. I observe also that each one of these is already covered by the explicit provisions in this United Nations treaty between us.

He went on to say that

> Friendly collaboration between States depends not solely upon treaty promises but upon the spirit that animates the Governments of the States concerned and upon actual performance. It was in the hope of promoting such a spirit and such performance that I went to Geneva last July, a course which had no peacetime precedent in American history.

After recalling what had happened at Geneva in July, the President wrote:

> Unhappily, the American people have had sadly to conclude that the events following our meeting have not given substance to their hope.

President Eisenhower then at some length traversed the course of the October Conference of Foreign Ministers, viewing it from the familiar United States standpoint. Then he spoke of 'a further deterioration', saying:

> To us it has seemed that your Government had, in various areas of the world, embarked upon a course which increases tensions by intensifying hatreds and animosities implicit in historic international disputes.

He laid special stress on his July proposal of 'open skies' which he said the Soviet Government had rejected at the Foreign Ministers' meeting.

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Bulganin's Second Letter

The second letter from Premier Bulganin maintained the friendly tone of the correspondence, which had awakened 'memories of those sincere and frank talks you and I and our colleagues had in Geneva', and answered President Eisenhower's points about the treaty. He wrote:

> As far as I can understand, you are disturbed that the draft treaty we had proposed reproduces to a certain extent some principles of the United Nations Charter, which bears the signatures of our countries. But this circumstance, it seems to us, far from hindering, on the contrary favours the conclusion of the treaty. The existence of the United Nations Charter by no means precludes the possibility of bilateral agreements, based on its principles, being concluded between members of this organisation.

He then gave detailed answers to each argument, and drew particular attention to 'quite understandable fears among the Soviet people with regard to the United States intentions' in the light of an actual 'increase in the number of American military bases' in areas 'adjacent to the frontiers of the Soviet Union'. He went on to say:

> Nor can one fail to pay attention to the fact that certain leading figures in the United States are continuing, in spite of the mutual assurances of peace given by you, Mr. President, and by myself at the Geneva Conference, to come out with statements which can in no way be described as being in keeping with the spirit of Geneva. It is common knowledge, for instance, that quite recently a statement was made in the United States favouring a policy that would keep the country 'on the brink of war'. Nor can one fail to pay attention to the bellicose utterances of certain military leaders of N.A.T.O., who openly call for a further arms race and the stockpiling of atomic weapons in the N.A.T.O. armies, and have no scruples about threatening to use those weapons.

'Open Skies'

He took up Eisenhower's 'open skies' proposal for reciprocal flights and aerial photography. He explained that in the present international situation of an unrestricted arms race such flights 'would not only fail to rid the peoples of the fear of another war but, on the contrary, would increase this fear as well as mutual suspicion'. He went on:

> It would be another thing if we reached agreement on reducing armaments and armed forces. Then the exercise of the appropriate control, upon which agreement could be reached with regard to the relevant methods, would be justified and necessary.

In the course of his letter Bulganin had cited what the Soviet Union had already done for easing international tension and strengthening confidence among states (cut of 640,000 in the armed forces; cut in

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the defence budget; giving up of the Porkkala base; the initiative for Austrian neutrality). He replied also to those, especially in the British press, who had 'explained' his treaty proposal as an attempt to split Britain from the U.S.A., when he mentioned that the U.S.S.R. was equally willing to conclude similar treaties with Britain and France. He added that the same held good for a Treaty between the parties in N.A.T.O. and the parties to the Warsaw Treaty (the U.S.S.R., Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania and the German Democratic Republic). The Warsaw Treaty Powers had just held a two-day meeting in Prague and their Political Consultative Committee had issued a Declaration on January 28. It was to this that Premier Bulganin was referring.

Chou En-lai Proposals for Peace

But there were even further peace proposals, this time from the People's Republic of China. On January 30, Chou En-lai speaking in Peking, made a series of proposals. The first concerned Viet-nam, where the provisions of the Geneva 1954 agreements about the general elections have been sabotaged and where the work of the international commission had been crudely obstructed. He said:

> China proposes to reconvene the Geneva Conference on Indo-China to ensure the implementation of the Geneva Agreements on Viet-nam. Furthermore, it holds that the three countries on the international commission in Viet-nam, namely, India, Poland and Canada, should be invited to participate in this conference.

Chou En-lai repeated in the same speech his proposal 'for the convening of a Far Eastern conference with the broad participation of Asian countries to settle the question of peaceful unification of Korea through negotiation'. He supported the idea of a collective peace pact for Asia and the Pacific, to include the United States of America. Lastly, he made a dramatic appeal to their Chinese fellow-countrymen in Formosa to get rid of the aggressors and to co-operate in the *peaceful* liberation of Taiwan and in re-uniting the island with the mainland. This series of practical proposals, favourably viewed in India, has received no public answer either from the British Government whose Prime Minister was joint chairman with V. M. Molotov of the summer 1954 Geneva Conference on Indo-China, nor from the United States. Would the two powers in their talks at Washington respond immediately and in a way that would lead to further detailed discussion? Would they similarly take account of the Bulganin-Eisenhower correspondence? As far

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as public statements went, the response was entirely negative. Indeed all that came to the public from the Washington talks was a Declaration and a communiqué.

Declaration of Washington

It has happened more than once at international conferences when one of the parties has no particular reason to be pleased with the outcome that all should agree upon a Declaration in general terms. It happened on this occasion. The Declaration of Washington proclaims the lofty aims of its signatories and the despicable nature of those to whom they are putting themselves in opposition. It is put in this way: 'Those who believe that man has his origin and his destiny in God and those who treat man as if he were designed merely to serve a state machine'. This has an odd ring about it. It certainly recalls the famous *'Gott mit uns'* (God with us) uttered by Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany as he launched his armies at the opening of the first world war. It recalls to one's mind also the verses written in that autumn of 1914:

God heard the embattled nations sing and shout
'Gott strafe England' and 'God save the King'.
God this, God that, and God the other thing.
'Good God!' said God, 'I'll have my work cut out'.

But this was hardly felt to be enough and so there was a second opening note, which may have appealed to the Prime Minister as recalling dimly something that he had once heard in the sixth form at Eton long, long ago. It said in the authentic accents of the anti-Socialists of the '80's: 'The state should exist for the benefit of the individual and not the individual for the benefit of the state'. For an exposure of this humpty-dumpty supposed knock-down type of argument the reader can be referred to any of the writings of the early Socialists in this or other countries. Of this, however, the advisers and drafters of documents for the Prime Minister and the President were as blissfully ignorant as their principals. However, no dog barked. And, apart from the odd atheist (who felt aggrieved at his exclusion), the Declaration, like a snowflake on the river, sank into oblivion.

The Washington Communiqué

So much for the lofty soaring declarations. What did they state when they came to the more factual communiqué? It said little and said it at some length. It expressed hostility to the spirit of

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Geneva and of peaceful co-existence and made clear that the Washington talks have not contributed to the cause of peace but to the increase of tension in many parts of the world. But it also showed (and this came probably as a revelation to the readers of the millionaire newspapers of Britain) that Anglo-American differences are extremely sharp. *The Times* in its comment made that perfectly clear:

> We shall have to wait for probably incidental disclosures in parliament to find out whether there is to be any real improvement in the exchange of atomic information; exactly what we have got in return for agreeing to negotiate with Saudi Arabia instead of insisting on arbitration; and whether the United States is ready to help us with the foreign exchange costs of the British forces in Germany.
>
> (*The Times*, February 3, 1956.)

It became clear that on the Far East the United States had made no concession. In reply to Britain's plea for the vast range of the embargo on British trade with China to be reduced to the scope of the lesser embargo on trade with the U.S.S.R., they would agree only to review the list. The meaning attached to this has been shown by a Senate Investigating Sub-Committee on February 16 conducting a hostile scrutiny into the details of British trade with Russia. On the Middle East there was no concession. There was 'no suggestion of a joint integrated programme'. (*The Times*, February 1, 1956.) But they agreed to ask France to join in discussion and any eventual action on Arab-Israel tension.

The 'Uncommitted' Powers

Those whose destinies had been discussed at Washington were not slow to give their answer. The Lebanon representative at the United Nations on behalf of the other Arab states immediately denounced the Washington talks as an unwarrantable interference in the affairs of the Middle East. India was hostile. 'We deeply regret the conclusion of the Baghdad pact, as we did that of the south-east Asia treaty organisation', said Dr. Prasad, President of India, at the opening on February 15 of the Indian parliament. 'India's reaction' to these treaties, as *The Times* put it a week earlier, 'has seriously disturbed the relations between Britain and India'. The Lebanon parliament, through its foreign affairs committee, publicly thanked the Soviet Union on February 17 for its mid-February statement (from the Foreign Ministry) that

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separate measures designed to be carried out without the knowledge of the United Nations and without the participation of the Near and Middle East countries, cannot but create threats to peace and security in the Near and Middle East and also cannot but violate the independence and sovereignty of the countries of that area, which runs counter to the principles and purposes of the United Nations.

To Socialism in Three Years

So far we have dwelt upon the recent international situation with its special impact on the lives and livelihood of the British people. At this very time in one country of the world there have been events with an immeasurable impact on the future, both there and internationally. These events, ignored, garbled or misinterpreted in the press which serves so ill the people of Britain, are on a scale hitherto unknown in transformations of human societies. A sudden change has taken place amongst the vast population of China, far exceeding that of capitalist Europe and the United States taken together, comprising a quarter of all mankind. In hundreds of millions, workers, peasants, handicraftsmen and capitalists have begun to move—fast—towards socialism. Mao Tse-tung, Chairman of the Chinese People's Republic, names it 'the high tide of the socialist revolution'. Since last summer the socialist transformations have been on such a scale that Mao Tse-tung on January 25 was able to draw the conclusion that *'the Socialist revolution will, in the main, be completed throughout the country within the next three years or so.'* No longer a generation ahead before completion, but in three years! Where now are all the wiseacres of the press, telling us only a few years ago of the 'immemorial China', of its 'unchanging peasantry', of 'the dirt, the smells and the flies', of its immutable way of life that 'Marxism could not alter'? In what part of the earth are they now to be found? Not even in the United States.

Six Years

Mao Tse-tung made his statement at a Supreme State Conference he had convened to discuss a national programme for agriculture for the next twelve years. This is twice as long as the period since the end of 1949 when the formation of the Chinese People's Republic marked the transition from the bourgeois-democratic to the socialist stage of the Chinese Revolution. In the first half of this six-year period the main concern was to rehabilitate the national economy and to carry out social transformations that were not completed at the previous stage of the revolution. In a country

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with 500 million peasants, land reform was carried through and landlordism ended. Peasants began to work in mutual-aid teams ('an embryonic form of socialism'). In some areas they set up co-operative productive societies ('semi-socialist'). In a few places the higher form of co-operative productive societies ('fully socialist') was reached. The lower form began to change into the higher forms: a majority of mutual-aid teams have already become co-operatives of the higher form. By the end of December, 1955, the number of agricultural producer co-operatives in the country had increased to over 1,900,000 with a total membership of 70 million peasant households throughout the country. In the second half of the six years, rehabilitation and land reform completed, the Chinese workers and peasants, leading the Chinese people, began their first five-year plan in 1953 with powerful aid from the Soviet Union in setting up new industrial plants. By the middle of 1955 it was clear that the five-year plan would be fulfilled before its time. The pace quickened. On January 30 the Executive Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference began its seven-days' discussion with a political report from Premier Chou En-lai, who stated:

> We can now see clearly that the socialist transformation of agriculture can be completed earlier than schedule. . . . In another year's time, that is in 1956, semi-socialist agricultural co-operation can be completed in the main. After another two years, that is by 1958, socialist agricultural co-operation will in the main be completed.

A Full Sea

The high tide of the socialist revolution reached also the handicraftsmen and artisans of China, one-quarter of whom are already enrolled in producer co-operatives. But there is more to come.

> *There is a tide in the affairs of men*
> *Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune . . .*
> *On such a full sea are we now afloat.*

'Not only is it possible', said Mao Tse-tung on January 25, 'to replace individual ownership of peasants and handicraftsmen by socialist collective ownership, but it is also possible to replace captalist ownership by socialist ownership'. By the end of December, 1955, more than half of large-scale capitalist industry in China had become joint state-private enterprises, which is regarded as the highest form of state capitalism. Rent, Profit and Interest? Rent has gone with the landlords. Profit has gone. Nothing remains to the capitalist but interest—and that only for a while. 'National

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industrialists and businessmen', said Chou En-lai on January 30, 'are more and more conscious of the fact that in China they cannot take the road of capitalism and that they can only accept transformation and take the road to socialism through peaceful transformation'. *'In China they cannot take the road of capitalism.'* And in Britain? If any of the 're-thinkers' of Right Wing Labour were to claim that this transformation corresponds to the 'mixed economy' beloved of Morrison and Gaitskell, let them think again, and ponder this:

> Thus the national industrialists and businessmen have come to see that their work and livelihood are fully guaranteed after the capitalist ownership is entirely eliminated in the future. On the political side, the state not only gives the national industrialists and businessmen the right to vote, but actively gives them ideological education. This is to make them understand that they can take their fate into their own hands only by following the laws of social development and to help them in changing themselves on a voluntary basis so that they can turn from the exploiters that they are today to the working people of tomorrow.
>
> (Chou En-lai, January 30, 1956).

The Chinese Intellectuals

Amongst these startling changes, with their extraordinary practical and theoretical significance, comes the development of the intellectuals, who in the past constituted such a well-defined stratum in Chinese society. But, as Kuo Mo-jo, President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said in the discussion on January 31:

> Long stagnation arising from the feudal system and prolonged aggression by imperialism in the last hundred years greatly obstructed the development of the intellectuals in 'Old China'.

The result is that there are too few of them, nor is there sufficient professional skill and political consciousness to meet the needs of speedy socialist construction. The number of highly skilled intellectuals in arts and sciences, education, medicine, engineering, and so on now stands at about 100,000, of whom over one-third have been trained in the last six years. The number has to be raised to a million in some twelve years to meet the needs of China's reconstruction. At the same time measures are set afoot to raise their professional skill. Together with this goes the re-education of the intellectuals themselves, cut off as they were in the past from the life of the people. On this one may note the remarks of Chou En-lai:

> Generally speaking there are three ways along which the re-education of the intellectuals proceeds. One is through observation and taking part

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in social life; the other is through the work in their profession and the third is through general theoretical study. All three are connected with each other. A person's thinking usually changes under the influence of all these three factors. But generally the broadest and most direct education is that received in social life.

(January 14, 1956.)

Such a sweeping and majestic reconstruction under the impetus of the drive to socialism should arouse not only admiration but a reawakening of socialist consciousness in our labour movement so that in no long time it may be possible for us too to see the poet's vision and say:

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return.

The Prospect for Peace

Thus, the camp of socialism is reinforced, both in Asia and in Europe. The wider camp of peace embraces the 'uncommitted' powers, amongst which India pursues a vigorous increasing campaign against the military treaties and war moves. Colonialism, still the watchword at Washington, is more and more detested throughout Asia and Africa. All this gives reason for good hope. But good hope should be the spur to good effort, especially throughout the British labour movement, for the defeat of the Tory Cabinet's foreign policy which ties Britain to United States imperialism, and for the reversal of Right Wing support of that policy. That good effort can be organised before and at the Easter Congresses. Just because of the successive determined moves for peace, all the sinister forces in Britain and the United States, regarding the Washington talks as their success, will desperately strive to increase international tension and endanger peace and security, whether in the Middle East, the Far East or elsewhere. Already at the beginning of January there were groupings in the Tory Party which desperately tried to cancel the invitation to the Soviet leaders to visit Britain in April. Again at the beginning of February there were inspired articles in the Sunday papers, hinting at plans to stop the visit. But, given that these wreckers are defeated, the visit next month of Premier Bulganin and N. Khrushchov must increase every hope for a renewal of the spirit of Geneva.

February 17, 1956.

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HOW TO FIGHT THE TORY OFFENSIVE

JOHN GOLLAN

FACED with ever sharpening competition from its American and German rivals in capitalist markets, and with widespread resistance from the liberation movements in colonial countries, British capitalism is trying to ease its difficulties at the expense of the working people of Britain. It thought that the return of a Tory Government in the May election last year would make this easy, and in fact the Government has brought in a series of measures intended in the first place to bring down the real value of wages and pensions, and also to bring about unemployment on a scale large enough to weaken the industrial workers and make possible a direct attack on wages.

But the public disagreements in the leading Tory and financial circles and the campaign against Eden showed that everything was not going to plan. Tory differences on home policy are not differences of aim. All want to press the offensive against the working class. Even the second stage of the Tory attack initiated by Macmillan has not satisfied big business circles.

What the Government fears is the degree of mass action its plans can provoke in the Labour movement. *The Times*, the *Financial Times*, the bulk of the employers and the bankers, have urged the Government not 'to give way again' to the demands for wage increases. Nevertheless, wage increases have had to be conceded in a number of industries, and will have to be given in others with claims outstanding, for the very simple reason that the organised workers have made it clear that they will insist on having them. They have shown their willingness and capacity to fight.

If the Tory offensive against the working people of Britain has not so far developed to its full extent this is due in the first place to the resistance it has met from the people, and the determination of the organised workers to maintain their position.

The projected increases in rents of Council houses are being fought all along the line. Wherever Councils raise their rents, by flat rate increases or by schemes of differential rents or rent rebates combined with higher standard rents, Labour, Communist, Liberal and Tory tenants are uniting in the fight against them. Sometimes the movement is strong enough to compel the withdrawal of the

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increase; sometimes it succeeds in a compromise. But everywhere it is delaying the operation of increases, and leading to many Labour Councils refusing even to put forward proposals for higher rents.

In its foreign policy the Tory Government is trying to run two incompatible lines. On the one hand, it aims at strengthening and extending the British imperialist grip, especially in the Middle East against both American rivals and the peoples of that region. On the other hand, it aims to buy off American competition by continuing support for America's aggressive war plans. The net result is that British foreign policy becomes more and more bankrupt. This has been shown above all in the fiasco of the Washington Conference. None of the Anglo-American differences were resolved. It becomes more and more obvious that Britain needs a new independent foreign policy. And it is the task of all the popular forces in Britain to create such public pressure as to compel the Government to conduct real peace negotiations with Khrushchov and Bulganin when they come to London. If this were done it could well mark a turning point in the international situation.

Thus, both in its home and its foreign and colonial policy, the Tory Government, which aimed at far-reaching measures to strengthen British capitalism, is already meeting mounting difficulties.

It is clear that with correct leadership and policy, a unique opportunity opens up before the labour movement to sweep the Tories from power. Their only hope of holding on is by the tacit support of the right wing Labour leaders. Gaitskell has developed the classic method of right wing 'opposition': denunciation of the Tory budget but acceptance in fact; a wordy fight on rents but insistence that tenants should pay up and that Labour Councils apply the Tory line; and on foreign policy fierce debates on unessentials, but complete support on the things which count.

This situation gives added importance to the Twenty-fourth National Congress of the Communist Party which meets in London at the end of this month. The resistance to the Tory plans which has already developed, especially in connection with the wages movement and the innumerable local struggles on rents, as well as on foreign and colonial issues, is in large measure the response of the workers to the call of the Communist Party for mass opposition to the Tory policies. The Communist campaign 'The People Will Decide' is bringing results.

The Communist Party Congress, on the basis of the results already

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achieved, will aim to carry these struggles forward to the complete defeat of the Tories, the winning of a majority of Labour and Communist Members of Parliament, and the establishment of a Labour Government with a progressive policy of social and economic advance and peace. The Political Resolution which will come before the Congress sets out the political line and the organisational steps necessary to realise these objectives. Rejecting the attitude of the right wing Labour leaders that the Tories are in office for five years and that nothing can be done about it, the draft Political Resolution sets the aim of making it impossible for the Tories to carry out their plans, through the development of a united movement of the people against them, using every form of industrial and political action. The core of this movement must be the organised working class; but progressive minded people among the middle classes can be won as allies. Already not only the workers but sections of the professional and middle classes are coming into active opposition to Tory policy.

The movement against the Tories and for a progressive policy is, however, being held back by the bans and prohibitions imposed by the right wing Labour leaders against united action with Communists. These bans against the Communists are the most potent weapon of the right wing for maintaining their control of the Labour Party, since they prevent the united strength of the Left from being brought to bear for a change of policy. The fight to end the bans is therefore vital for the future of the labour movement.

The draft Political Resolution brings out the role of the Communist Party both in the immediate fight against the Tories and in the whole struggle that leads to Socialism. It is able to fulfil this role because its policy, programme and organisation are based on the class outlook of Marxism, and it is the only Party of Socialism in Britain today.

> This is why the strengthening of the Communist Party is the key to the advance of the whole working class, and why all Socialists can most effectively work for their cause as members of the Communist Party.

Attention is drawn in the resolution to the number of members of the Labour Party and active trade unionists who have joined the Communist Party in recent months. In fact, since the resolution was drafted, there have been many further recruits to the Communist Party from these sources: it is a process which must gather strength as the character and results of right wing Labour policy become more widely understood, while it also becomes clearer that many claiming

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to be leaders of the Labour Left have been unable to conduct a real battle for a new policy.

There is a sharp contrast between the rising militancy of the workers and the further move to the right which the dominant clique in the Labour Party has made with the election of Gaitskell as leader of the Labour Party. Everywhere the workers are on the alert, ready to meet each challenge from the employers and to fight to maintain and improve their conditions. Side by side with the national trade union demands for higher wages a continuous fight is being waged in the factories against employers' attacks on shop stewards and trade union rights, against threatened dismissals and cuts in piece rates. It is the same in the towns, and villages too, against rent increases. Bitter feeling is developing against the Tory Government's repeated refusals to negotiate a real peace settlement in Europe, the banning of the H-bomb and a reduction in armaments; its refusal to press openly for the admission of People's China to the United Nations or to repudiate the American-imposed bans on trade with the Socialist countries; its refusal to cut the call-up and the persistent use of conscripts against the colonial peoples, especially now in Cyprus. The April budget will mark a further desperate attempt by the Tories to attack working class standards, and will intensify working class resistance and demands for improved conditions.

Yet, in this situation, so full of opportunity for the Labour movement, the right wing leaders conduct a decorous dispute with the Tories in Parliament on the best constitutional lines, while outside Parliament they use their influence to discourage and damp down the struggle; there is no consistent challenge from the Left, no real leadership, no real attempt to gather together the forces of the Left, including the Communist Party, to strengthen the fight against the Tories and the right wing leaders.

It is becoming more and more obvious that the whole development of the movement depends on the Communist Party and the political and organisational leadership it is giving to the fight. This will be the main task of the Communist Congress. This leadership has all the greater influence because, at a time when the legend of a reformed capitalism and a Welfare State is losing its charm, and on the other hand the Socialist countries are taking great steps forward, the Communist Party alone is holding aloft the banner of Socialism in Britain, and calling on the working people to look forward with confidence to the future. Its programme, *The British Road to Socialism,* not only puts clearly the real meaning of

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Socialism against all distortions, but shows the way to realise it in Britain.

The forthcoming Congress of the Communist Party is therefore of exceptional importance for the whole Labour movement. But it must also mark a decisive stage in the development of the Communist Party itself. Every Party organisation is striving to go to this Congress with more members than at our last Congress, as a prelude to a great new effort for the big expansion of the Party which the situation so urgently requires.

DOES LABOUR DESERVE GAITSKELL?

JAMES KLUGMANN

THE Labour Party has a new leader whom it did not choose and did not deserve. 'Since 1922', wrote Mr. R. T. McKenzie in his solid study of British Political Parties, 'the Labour Party appears to have taken for granted that the leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party is in fact the leader of the Labour Party'. 'It seems surprising', he adds, 'that no demand ever appears to have been made that the party outside Parliament should play any part in his election'. Surprising it would indeed be if there were no protest. In fact, however, there is a growing resentment of the undemocratic process by which the Parliamentary Party has come to dominate the Party itself, and by which, when in office, Cabinet has come to dominate the Parliamentary Party. The demand grows that the Annual Congress of the Party should make the decisions, decide policy and elect the leadership, including 'the leader'.

That the majority of the Parliamentary Party is less and less representative of the Party and more and more a brake upon the militant feelings of its members has become increasingly obvious. The very facts of the class composition of the Parliamentary Party are revealing, to say the least. According to J. F. S. Ross, electoral expert (*Elections and Electors*, 1955), its percentage of rank and file workers has fallen from an average of 72 per cent in the inter-war years to 45 per cent in 1951, whilst, in the same period, the percentage of professional people has risen from 24 per cent to 45·5 per cent, and employers and managers from 4 per cent to 9 per cent. In 1951, barristers and solicitors in the Parliamentary Labour Party

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outnumbered engineers, builders, woodworkers, railwaymen and dockers all put together. Thus the Parliamentary Party which—without consultation—saddles the Party with a leader and the labour movement with a prospective Prime Minister, is becoming more and more remote in class composition and class outlook from the feelings and aspirations of the British working people. And if the Parliamentary Party is out of contact and out of tune with the labour movement, still more so is the newly selected leader, Mr. Hugh Todd Naylor Gaitskell.

Mr. Gaitskell's background is not exactly promising from a socialist angle though it is true enough that he did not choose it. A father, distinguished in the Indian Civil Service; a grandfather consul-general in Shanghai; a brother administrator in the Sudan—'it was against this background that Hugh Gaitskell spent his formative years', writes *Fact*, the Labour Party monthly, in January, 1956. At Winchester, like Richard Crossman and Douglas Jay, he learned his enduring respect for the public schools of Britain ('I am not attacking the public schools; I was at one of them and one of the best of them. . . . They are good schools, and I do not think it is a good plan to abolish them'—Labour Party Conference speech, 1953). From Winchester to Oxford, where he learned his economics, from Oxford to the Workers' Educational Association, from W.E.A. to lecturer in economics at the University College, London, civil servant in the Ministry of Economic Warfare and Board of Trade during the war—this is where Hugh Gaitskell served his political apprenticeship far from the madding crowd and not very near to the struggles of the labour movement. Elected M.P. for South Leeds in 1945 he began on his meteoric career—Parliamentary Secretary to Mr. Shinwell, Minister of Fuel and Power, Minister of State for Economic Affairs, Chancellor of the Exchequer. 'Gaitskell had played no prominent part in the labour movement prior to 1945', wrote Mr. Shinwell (*Conflict Without Malice*, 1955), 'his ministerial appointments and in particular that to the Exchequer caused considerable surprise, and among some members (not only Bevan's supporters) a considerable amount of misgivings at the time'. But the twin slogans of restraint and rearmament were a winner for a rapid rise. No-one can complain that Mr. Gaitskell failed to make his position clear. In 1947 he told the miners that they should forget about workers' control of industry. In 1951, he put the first charges on National Health to pay for the government's £4,700 million arms programme. He became the perfect partisan of economic bi-partisanship ('Butskellism') and expanded his bi-

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partisanship to foreign policy. He became the right wing's infant prodigy, was put forward by them against Mr. Bevan as National Treasurer and groomed by them as Mr. Attlee's successor.

Can it be wondered that when he stepped into the leader's shoes he was applauded above all by the capitalist press. 'Congratulations to Mr. Gaitskell' (from the *Daily Express*)—'At the Treasury one great thing in his favour was his courageous appeal for wage restraint' (*Daily Mail*)—'Mr. Gaitskell has proved that he can meet the challenge of the day' (*Daily Sketch*). The challenge of the day is the deep desire of the labour movement to move forward to socialism. But we need to be clear. The case against Mr. Gaitskell is not his class origin for which he bears no responsibility. Other men and women have emerged from a capitalist background (even Winchester and Oxford) and lined up directly with the working class. The charge is that when he came to the labour movement he brought with him his capitalist background and class outlook virtually intact. The old Fabians whom (in his recent essay '*The Ideological Development of Democratic Socialism in Great Britain*) Mr. Gaitskell so much admires, set themselves the task of 'permeating' the Liberals and Tories with socialism, and succeeded to a large extent in 'permeating' the labour movement with liberalism. Mr. Gaitskell (former executive member of the Fabian Society and foundation member of the New Fabian Research Bureau) is following in the footsteps of his acknowledged ideological ancestors, though it is true in his essay he seems to think that the Fabians went too far (in their socialism). He has brought with him into the labour movement all the ideas of capitalism. ('Mr. Gaitskell may be called the Tory Socialist or even the Liberal Conservative', *Daily Mail*, September, 1951.) The old Fabians and right wing socialists at least claimed to stand for the *aim* of socialism, though the *method* that they preached made its achievement impossible. Mr. Gaitskell stands amongst the contemporary group of the right wing who look askance even at the *aim* of socialism. Examine, for example, his general election addresses of 1945, 1950, 1951 and 1955 and you will find four words conspicuous for their absence—working class, nationalisation, capitalism and socialism.

He is a protagonist of the Morrison school of 'empirical socialists' who strongly object to formulating any socialist aims at all.

> Moreover in Britain the course to be followed was never charted too far in the future. 'We'll see how far we go'—a favourite phrase of a highly influential socialist, Mr. Herbert Morrison—reflects the general

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view that you can always look a little way ahead, but not too far, and that only as you move on will the picture become sufficiently clear to make plans which are realistic enough to be of value'.

(The Ideological Development of Democratic Socialism in Great Britain).

The trouble is that once you renounce the aim of socialism you are binding yourself to the capitalist system. It is not only that the working people are deprived of a vision, perspective of the new society and a strategy in the fight to achieve it. But the very small-scale step by step advance by reform that is advocated is at the mercy of the inevitable vagaries of capitalism. Given a temporary boom, then, within the framework of capitalism certain small reforms may very grudgingly be granted, but as soon as recession, crisis, slump follows the boom, as soon as deficits, market difficulties, redundancy, fierce competition and all the inevitable symptoms of capitalism express themselves, the spokesmen of gradual reform now appeal to the labour movement to retreat, give up their gains, 'make sacrifices in the interests of the nation'. It is one step forwards two steps backwards with a vengeance. Mr. Gaitskell replaces the socialist aims of the pioneers with some vague woolly objective of 'egalitarian society' and then proceeds to claim that this objective has already in a large measure been achieved within capitalism. In his Preface to the *Voice of the People,* published on February 7, 1956, to commemorate the Jubilee of the Parliamentary Labour Party he informs us that we are well on the way to the desired goal:—

The class divisions (in Western Europe) have crumbled but not yet disappeared.

Economic planning which socialists have always, and correctly, connected with socialism, is already completely achieved (in Gaitskell's imagination) under capitalism. In the second world war, he states, 'for the first time Britain had a fully planned economy' (*The Ideological Development of Democratic Socialism*).

If class divisions have crumbled and fully planned economy has already been achieved in Britain, what still remains to be done? If this is what is meant by the old socialist ideals of planned economy and classless society, people could well be excused for saying 'Thank you very much, I've seen it and I'm not enthusiastic'. In this way Gaitskellism falls completely into the hands of the Tory propagandists who proclaim 'You've had socialism under the Labour Government, and what was it worth anyway?'. This role of Gaitskellism in aiding Tory anti-socialist propaganda is seen still more clearly on the issue of nationalisation.

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Now, the pioneers of nationalisation in the British labour movement like the miners and railwaymen of the 1880's and 1890's, called for the nationalisation of their industries, because they wanted to take these essential sources of wealth out of the hands of the capitalist class and put them into the hands of the workers. This was a good healthy militant objective, and without the nationalisation, first of the key industries and then of all industry, of all the means of production, distribution and exchange, socialism is impossible. But nationalisation *in itself* is *not* socialism. Nationalisation means state ownership and control and the crux of the matter is *what sort of a state* is doing the owning and controlling. Is it the capitalist state or the socialist state? There can be capitalist nationalisation *or* socialist nationalisation. There can be ownership and control by a socialist state in the interests of the working people *or* class ownership and control by a capitalist state in the interest of the maximum profits of the monopolies. The fallacy of the right-wing spokesmen, including Gaitskell, is that they accept the present type of essentially capitalist nationalisation as the only type of nationalisation; and then, deriving support from the disappointment in its very shortcomings, use this to argue against further nationalisation and to throw cold water on the idea of nationalisation in general. He admits that owing to the large-scale compensation that has been paid nationalisation in Britain has not had the effect of redistributing wealth from the capitalist class to the working class. But he regards the compensation as sacred.

A genuine socialist attitude would be to say 'Let us fight now, even under capitalism, to improve nationalisation—cut compensation, democratise the boards, improve living standards in the nationalised industries, end the cheap services to private industry, extend nationalisation to new key fields: but let us understand that nationalisation will never have its full advantages for the working class, will never be socialist nationalisation, until ownership and control is exercised by a state of a socialist type.' Gaitskell's attitude is to use the inevitable shortcomings of existing capitalist nationalisation to argue against its extension and thus add fuel in plenty to the flames of Tory propaganda.

Like all right-wing theoreticians from the first Fabians, through Ramsay Macdonald to Herbert Morrison, Gaitskell starts from the presumption that the state is something neutral and above classes, that can equally serve capital or labour. He reproaches the late Professor Laski for making a distinction between capitalist and socialist states:—

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85th Anniversary of the Paris Commune

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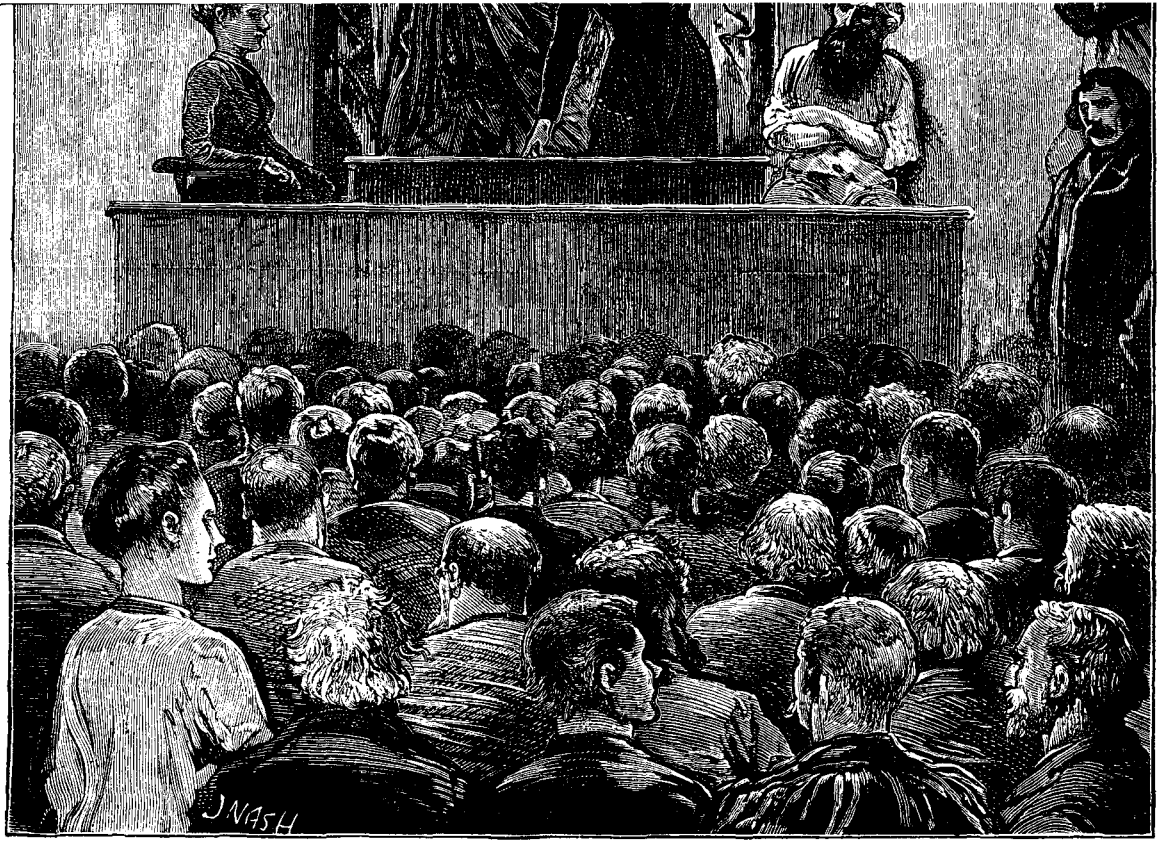

Louise Michel addressing a meeting of Communards in Paris *(From a contemporary print)*

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It was the weakness of Professor Laski (that) he was sometimes inclined to blur the distinction between democracy and dictatorship and to place more emphasis on the differences between capitalist and socialist states.

(Ideological Development of Democratic Socialism in Great Britain)

Mr. Gaitskell's weakness is to blur the distinction between capitalist and socialist states, capitalist and socialist nationalisation, or, in a word, between capitalism and socialism, And so he finds himself, having rejected nationalisation as an integral part of socialism, replacing socialist aims by the objective of 'a mixed economy':—

I believe that in future we are going to have three sectors in industry—one completely nationalised, one left to private enterprise and one of a mixed type where there will be a good deal of state partnership and enterprise working alongside with private enterprise.

(*Daily Herald,* June 19, 1953).

Now the *mixed* character of Gaitskell's dream-economy is nothing but a myth. Of course there have been genuine mixed economies in the transition to socialism. They exist today in the Peoples Democracies. There was a 'mixed economy' in the U.S.S.R. between 1917 and the elimination of capitalism in the early thirties. But there the state was in the hands of the working people, and used step by step to develop the socialist sectors of economy until capitalism should be eliminated from all sectors of industry, agriculture and trade. In Britain we still have a capitalist state; the existence side by side of a nationalised and a private sector of economy is not a mixed economy but the co-existence of *two types of private capitalist economy.* There is not nor ever has been any socialism in Britain up to now.

As he explained very clearly in his oration at Birkbeck College in December 1954 (*In Defence of Politics*), there really is no *essential* difference between the Tories and what, in his estimation, the Labour Party *ought* to be. Superficial differences on day-to-day policy, yes, but:—

If they (the differences) go too far and run too deep and are not held in check by a floating vote, democracy (read capitalism—J.K.) may not survive. A certain basis of consent, and willingness to compromise, to accept the rules of the game is absolutely essential.

The rules of the game! He means the capitalist rules for conducting capitalist society. He sees the Tories and Labour as two opposing teams engaged in a gentlemanly game of cricket, taking alternative innings by gentleman's agreement (a sort of Gentlemen v. Players with a gentleman as the players' captain).

The rules of the game are capitalism with the preservation of the capitalist state, private enterprise, the capitalist empire and, as

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far as possible, a capitalist world. Mr. Gaitskell's defence of capitalism extends from a capitalist Britain to the capitalist world. He has been as consistently hostile to the socialist and people's democratic countries as he has been in support of American capitalism. 'We must have American help', he declared at the Labour Party Conference in 1952. 'I personally believe that the decision that was taken by the whole government in January, 1951, to step up the rearmament programme and collaborate with our allies in N.A.T.O. . . . was a wise and courageous decision'. Rearmament therefore becomes the permanent justification of restraint at home.

The Labour Party has been ordered to 'return to school' for a three-year period of 're-thinking'. The aim of Mr. Gaitskell and of the others who have issued the instruction is to find new formulations to cover the basic renunciation of socialism and of the socialist aims long accepted and fought for in the labour movement. But there is 're-thinking' and 're-thinking'—capitalist re-thinking and socialist re-thinking. It is true there is plenty to think about, and one of these things is how to defeat Gaitskellism in the Labour movement and to win the movement on the basis of genuine socialist ideas for a policy of advance to socialism in Britain.

There is a strong swing to the left inside the trade union, co-operative and labour movement generally—a swing away from wage restraint, witch-hunting, anti-Sovietism, dependence on U.S.A., class collaboration, away from Gaitskellism. The militant feelings for struggle are very positive, but something more is needed—a genuine socialist perspective, a fight to restore in the labour movement the inspiration of socialism, socialist aims and socialist ideas. This will only be achieved by the unity of all the forces of the left in the labour movement, by a fight for the restoration of democracy within the labour movement, and by a fight against the capitalist ideas that are now damping the spirit and confusing the mind of the present and prospective supporters of Labour.

FROM THE *LABOUR MONTHLY* OF 25 YEARS AGO

WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS

The present crisis is marked by one character which is without parallel in any previous crisis of capitalism. That character is the simultaneous growth and expansion of socialism in one section of the world in the midst of the heaviest crisis of capitalism. This growth of socialism in the midst of the decline of capitalism has now become the dominant fact of the international situation.

From *The International Situation*, by R.P.D. March, 1931.

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WHAT NOW IN FRANCE?

PETER FRYER

THE fundamental question now before the people of France is whether they will enjoy the fruits of their great electoral victory of January 2, 1956. Will the forces of reaction succeed in robbing them of that victory, in dividing the Left, in prolonging the disastrous, crisis-ridden eight years' record of governing France without the Communists and against the working class? Or will the forces of democracy manage to compel the far-reaching political changes for which 11 million voted—above all, the formation of a Government of the Left based on the entire Left-wing majority in the National Assembly?

The second alternative has dismayed France's enemies in France and abroad, who are displaying every sign of panic at the possibility of these 11 million imposing their will for Left-wing unity on the Socialist and Radical leaders. 'A way out of the dilemma is hard to see' (*The Times*); 'a frightening picture of discord and confusion . . . Democracy is poised on a razor's edge' (*New Statesman*); 'the whole future of French politics depends on the [Socialist] Party's continuing to refuse coalition with the Communists under the seductive name of "popular front" ' (*Manchester Guardian*); 'the one vital question [is] whether the very régime is in danger . . . A Popular Front in France . . . is the most fearsome of all the spectres raised by the French elections' (*Sunday Times*): these apprehensions on the Right, 'Left' and Centre alike are the measure of the salutary shock that has been administered to the complacency of those who had written off both the French working class and its Party. What shocked them more than anything else were the Communist gains, the solid core of $5\frac{1}{2}$ million Communist votes, the solid core of 151 Communist deputies that has transformed the balance of the National Assembly. They recognise the hard, if to them appalling, fact that the electoral triumph of the Left was first and foremost the work of the French Communist Party, which started preparing for it the day after the 1951 General Election. It was the Communists who led the swing to the Left, who re-awakened the confidence of the ordinary people of France in the Popular Front as the road out of their difficulties and in their ability to create it and carry it to victory. For the tens of thousands of British Labour Party members who rejoice at the swing to the Left in France there is surely food for thought in the part the Communists have played.

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This call for a new Popular Front, which was the thread tying together the Communist Party's electoral programme, finds an echo in the hearts of a whole generation of French workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie, who remember vividly the achievements of 1936: the 40-hour week, the holidays with pay, the wage increases, the breaking-up of the fascist gangs. Of course a Popular Front victory is not yet Socialism. Nor, on the other hand, is the Popular Front an occasional electoral tactic or slogan. Nor, again, is it merely a Parliamentary coalition of the Leaders of the Left-wing parties. It is essentially a mass movement of the working people, of the working class and the middle strata—a firm class alliance against reaction, for the improvement of the people's conditions within the framework of capitalism. The unity and coalition achieved in the National Assembly are the Parliamentary expression of this mass movement, the reflection of the popular pressure. Since January 2 the pressure has been mounting steadily. *L'Humanité's* front page is a national thermometer registering daily the amazing clamour from workshops, pits, transport depots, universities and villages right across France, where Communists, Socialists, Radicals and democrats of no party affiliation are forging the class alliance, setting up Popular Front committees and sending their demands to the Socialist leader Mollet and the Radical leader Mendès-France. These demands can be summed up in the one word 'unity'.

It was this tide of popular feeling, this unmistakable mood of determination, that frustrated the scurrying backstairs efforts of the Right to paste together a 'Centre-Right' coalition during January, and that forced the confirmation of Mollet as Prime Minister on February 1 by 420 votes to 71, with 83 abstentions. To the jaundiced eye of the *Manchester Guardian's* Paris correspondent it was a 'frustrated Assembly', which gave Mollet 'sullen support', and in which 'the Communists, spreading over a quarter of the seats of the Palais Bourbon, pushing the Socialists towards the centre and the Centre parties to the right, were the only cheerful people'. If the Right Wing were sullen, it was because Mollet's investiture with Communist support represented an undoubted check to their plans. Not that either Mollet's team or his policy are without big shortcomings. They are not what the majority of the French people voted for. But his declaration that he wanted to reach a settlement of the Algerian question; his willingness to satisfy certain of the workers' long-standing economic demands (*e.g.* the demand for a three-weeks' holiday throughout France); and his declared support for disarmament and international agreement: these promises were

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welcomed by the French people. By voting for Mollet the Communist deputies were giving him the opportunity of turning these promises into actions. At the same time the Communist leader Jacques Duclos spoke out in the Assembly for the adoption of measures which alone correspond to the needs and demands of the French people—which are what the majority voted for and which are the real basis for an understanding among the three Left-wing parties. He called for a peaceful solution of the Algerian problem through negotiations with qualified representatives of the Algerian people. He called for a foreign policy of peace and disarmament. He called for all-round improvements in the people's living standards. He called for the ending of the state subsidy to Catholic schools. Amid applause from the Socialist benches and the public galleries, he called for a united struggle against the new fascist danger in France—the rise of the demagogic, anti-semitic Poujadist outfit. And Duclos forecast boldly that mass pressure and the widespread desire for unity would tip the scales on the Left—'sooner, perhaps, than certain people expect'. Next day *The Times*, in accents of deepest gloom, took up this forecast:

> If the present Government should fall, and if no regrouping of the 'parliamentary' parties offered a workable substitute, the pressure to rely on the Communists' support, and even to bring them into the Government, will become very strong. It would be hard to overestimate the dangers . . . of such a development. The inevitable effect of an alliance with Communism—formal or informal—would be to reverse the international policies which have been pursued by every Government of the Fourth Republic. Internally the Republic would be exposed to the gravest perils.

But the 'peril' of unity in face of the tremendous hostile pressure (and possible counter-offensive) of French reaction and of British and American imperialism has already reached the 'informal' stage, if by informal is meant the rank and file. The 'formal' stage of this unity depends on the responsibility with which the leaders of the Socialist and Radical Parties decide to act. The influences that are being brought to bear on them and the alternatives that lie before them are quite clear. On the one hand the reactionaries are engaging in every degree of pressure, from soft words and whispers about 'reconciliation' and 'burying the election hatchet' to the hisses, boos, stones and rotten vegetables with which the fascist rioters pelted Mollet in Algiers. To succumb to this pressure implies not merely the resignation of a new Minister-Resident before he has properly assumed the post: it implies betraying very quickly all the promises made by the 'Republican Front' during the electoral campaign and afterwards. It means the continuation for France of the

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old, discredited policies, the same unstable governments, the same succession of crises. It means acute resentment on the part of the millions who voted in precisely the opposite sense. On the other hand, the people are insisting more and more that the leaders of the Socialist and Radical parties, basing themselves on everything that is best and healthiest in the French nation, should go forward with the Communists in a new Popular Front, pledged to peace and social progress.

For Mollet, Mendès-France and the men around them there can be no standing still in the present. They are hardly likely to be able to muster 420 votes again. Sooner or later they will have to choose. Either choice has its own logic. If they close their ears to the voice of the French people and decide to buttress their Government with support from the Right—and even from well to the Right—of Centre, they will inevitably be surrendering themselves to the control of the reactionaries. Yet they will not stop the Popular Front marching forward from success to success. If they turn a deaf ear to Anglo-American shrieks of alarm and give the French people the Government and policy they are waiting for, they will be acting as real statesmen and patriots—almost the first French non-Communist politicians to display either statesmanship or patriotism for eight years. For only a Government backed up by the majority of the French people and acting according to the people's will can solve France's problems in the people's interests. And without the support of the 151 Communist deputies there can be no such Government of the Left, no new policy, no break with the past.

Such a Government will undoubtedly have to meet and conquer enormous difficulties. But it will enjoy what none of its predecessors since 1947 has enjoyed—the warm sympathy and active, militant support of Frenchmen and Frenchwomen who passionately love their country and her great republican, progressive and democratic traditions. With an *élan* and enthusiasm that hold the promise of a real French Renaissance, these citizens are discussing, rallying, uniting and acting so that the hopes born on January 2 may be speedily fulfilled.

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HOMES FOR THE PEOPLE—OR MEANS TEST?

THOMAS BALMER

GOVERNMENT policy concerning council housing programmes, interest rates on housing loans and housing subsidy has brought consternation to town halls throughout the country; and to millions of homes. The policy is well devised for bringing council building of houses to virtual standstill.

It is not intended that councils shall find some way out and continue to build despite formidable barriers now raised. The rents of future houses will be prohibitive, even if some of the lost State subsidy is replaced by putting up the rents of present tenants. The money for building will not be easy to get, either from the money market or the Public Works Loans Board. Councils, and their housing officials, know that housing need remains still so acute—although 2¼ million homes have been built since 1945—that it seems unthinkable that building should stop. The only way to struggle on, as some believe, is to adopt the cynical proposal of the Housing Minister: namely, to compel present tenants to contribute from higher rents enough to pay the higher interest on loans and to make up for the disappearing subsidy on general housing and the inadequacy of the subsidy for slum clearance housing. Thus, instead of rousing the people to destroy the Government policy, they adopt a device which is both cruel and unjust—and that does not solve the desperate housing problem.

By law, council rents must be 'reasonable'. Though the Courts and lawyers declare there is no strict definition of what is 'reasonable', it has been generally accepted that a reasonable council rent is one corresponding to what is charged for similar accommodation in the private landlord sector. Yet a large number of council tenants are now paying higher rents and rates than private landlords' tenants. They are managing to do so by a great deal of overtime and by their wives going out to work. If overtime ceases, or unemployment appears, disaster faces these families.

The subsidy fixed in 1946 has never been adjusted in relation to ever-rising building costs, and only partially adjusted in relation to higher interest rates while costs of repairs and management have steadily risen. Thus local councils have already had the prospect

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of deficits in their housing revenue accounts for many years. They have avoided a deficit by putting up the rents piecemeal. This was a hardship to many tenants who had no true capacity for paying.

When these rises became patently too burdensome for the poorer tenants the curious idea was born of having different rents for identical houses, adjusted according to tenants' incomes. This came in the form of a plausible argument, namely, that 'the housing subsidy should be used for those who need it most, cutting down the subsidy for those who need it less or least'. In fact, of course, the subsidy is a grant to the local authorities to meet their expected losses through charging 'reasonable rents'. It is not a subsidy of rents as such. But over the years it has been loosely viewed as attaching to the house itself. It has not been very difficult, therefore, for Tories and housing 'specialists' to sow the dangerous notion that the subsidy should be linked to the tenant, not to the house. From that it was an easy step to question whether every tenant needed the same subsidy—perhaps some needed none at all? The familiar nonsense about T.V. sets, motor cars, sons earning big wages, mothers at work, gross national expenditure on smokes and beer, etc., all appeared once more. All this argument has not only undermined the principles of municipal housing but has prepared the way for ending subsidy altogether. It has vanished altogether for future house-building; it will soon be under attack for existing houses.

This destructive work has, unhappily, been greatly aided by certain Labour-controlled councils (Lambeth among the first) and by the utterances of some Labour spokesmen who have put forward an argument which could be regarded as shameless if it were not the result of muddled thinking. Charging different rents for identical houses according to tenants' incomes, they claim, is 'socialistic', i.e. 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'. But this famous formula refers only to a fully communist society, beyond socialism and far beyond the conditions of capitalism. It has nothing to do with the present housing problem under capitalism. Those who use this muddled argument to support capitalist differential squeezing of tenants could have had their eyes opened if they had paid attention to how the Tories were using it. Mr. Duncan Sandys, the Minister of Housing, referred to this formula in a speech last year (characteristically calling it 'the old Fabian doctrine') and cordially recommended it! So much for the supposed 'socialistic' principle!

Besides, if a principle is involved, no one can explain why it

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emerges after 35 years of subsidised housing and only when deficits are appearing and the Government won't give any more subsidy; indeed is taking it all away. More important, if there were such a principle then it follows that there must also be a principle of what is the proper proportion of a man's wages to be paid away in rent. No one has ventured on that investigation—as yet! Again, such a proportion would obviously have to be similarly applied in every locality. Further, the proportion cannot be the same percentage at all levels of income; for example, in the private sector of housing the percentage diminishes as the income rises. Suppose this same formula were universally applied, it would be far from suiting the councils. For some it will not raise enough yield; for others it might be too much.

This explains what in practice happens whenever a council has imposed the differential rents type of means test. (Quite apart from any chatter about 'principles', socialistic or otherwise.) This is why there are such varying percentages and such different sums to be deducted or added for this or for that. The councils' officials discover what they wish to raise and then work out an arithmetical formula which will get the result they want! For some it is a fifth of wages, for others a sixth or a seventh or some other fraction or percentage. There is no question of what the percentage 'ought' to be in relation to any national statistical data or to social facts; it is just a question of the arithmetic of the councils' housing revenue account: how much do we want?

It should now be clear that there is no principle in all this. It is expediency. Where is there a Labour Party member who does not denounce expediency and insist on principle? Those who have allowed themselves to be muddled into expediency, Tory expediency, in the guise of a supposed principle had better recall their old standpoint of housing as a social service and concentrate their thinking on how best to defeat the destructive policy of the Tories. A higher State subsidy is what should be demanded to build homes for the people, instead of attempting fruitlessly to 'solve' problems of 'soaking' the tenants.

This old standpoint was still being upheld in many if not most of the local Labour parties, despite the pressure from the Tories and the aid given to the Tories by those who had gulled themselves into accepting the supposed 'socialistic' principle of the means test for tenants. At this point the national Labour Party leaders decided to take a hand in the matter. The private conference of Labour councillors and aldermen held during January in London

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received, by adroit work from Transport House, terrific publicity throughout the national press and radio for the policy of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party on council rents —but none at all for what the delegates had to say. A long and ingeniously argued document circulated to delegates as 'confidential' was issued to the press as a speech delivered by Mr. Morgan Phillips (though he never gave it utterance). This circulated policy document firmly commends differential rents as a *system,* and treats the automatic means test involved as entirely unobnoxious and on all fours with income tax returns and thirteen cited 'means tests' in several of the social services. But in his remarks at the conference Mr. Morgan Phillips put the matter rather differently. Faced by the growing hostility to a system called Differential Rents (sharpened by what took place in various places where tenants offered stout resistance) and by the alienation of Labour councils from their supporters on council estates, he advised Labour authorities to make a variation in the means test for tenants by adopting what he called Rebate Schemes instead of Differential Rents. What is the difference?

Differential Rents is a system for fixing everyone's rents by reference to family income. Such systems involve a minimum and a maximum rent for each house and these can modify the effect of the percentage calculations. Everyone necessarily receives an elaborate questionnaire and a form for giving consent that verification may be obtained from employers. Those who decline to answer the questionnaire have to pay the maximum rent.

A Rebate Scheme operates in a different manner. It is not a system for fixing rents. The rents are fixed in relation to the annual outgoings of each house (loan repayment and interest, repairs and management) less all or part of the subsidy attributable to the house, though some authorities deduct none at all. This involves no questionnaire or means test for establishing the rent. But—and here comes the differential idea in a new guise—anyone who feels the rent to be too much can *apply* for a rebate. To get his case considered, he must answer a long questionnaire and give consent for reference to his employer for verification. The rebate is usually calculated by a percentage formula applied to family income, with similar additions and deductions for children and earning grown-ups just as in the Differential Rents system.

The great 'difference' between the two methods of introducing Differential Rents is that, under a Rebate Scheme, no one need undergo a means test unless he chooses. If he does so choose, what

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complaint can he reasonably make about the means test? ('Needs must, when the devil drives'.) Making the means test a 'voluntary' business, instead of something imposed, could make a Rebate Scheme attractive to Labour-controlled councils afraid of the all-in means test of the Differential Rents system.

It may be presumed that most tenants would be in need of a rebate, for the economic rents, being designed to raise the total rent roll, must be high rents. But there are tenants who may well shrink from seeking 'rent aid' as self-confessed poor people. They will hate the referemce to employers, for it suggests something odd about how they manage their wages if they are seeking relief in their rent payments. If many tenants refrain from applying for needed rebates, then the councils will be very pleased (more yield to the housing revenue account) and may then claim that the fixed rents are really very reasomable, because so few have asked for rebates.

The organisation of tenants to resist having housing deficits shifted on to their shoulders will be very difficult wherever Rebate Schemes come into operation. Those who pay up the increased economic rent will take little or no part in the local movement. Those who apply for the rebate will not be known to the tenants' association officials nor are they very likely to declare themselves. That the entire number of council tenants on an estate should band together to have the fixed rents lowered (and so rule out discriminatory rebates altogether) is obvious. But the counter-propaganda that rebates are available if rents are too high will make it more difficult to enlist the sympathy and support of the townspeople generally. The Rebate Scheme is little more than a strike-breaking scheme that can dissolve the solidarity of the tenants.

Hence, it becomes more important than ever that the organisations of tenants as workers, i.e., their trade unions, should now play a bigger rôle in the people's struggle for good municipal housing at reasonable rents. Fortunately a great deal appears to be happening already in the union branches and in trades councils both on the housing 'cut' and the impending rise in private landlords' rents, all of which will be reflected in the agenda of this year's Trades Union Congress. What is essential is that the local Labour parties, and the Labour Groups, should abandon their support for various differential rent devices to make council tenants foot the bill, and turn their thoughts, and their campaigning zeal, towards forcing real solutions for the local authorities' financial problems from the Government.

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THE GREAT PIONEER

ANDREW ROTHSTEIN

TWENTY-TWO years ago, on the centenary of Morris' birth, Robin Page Arnot wrote his *Vindication of William Morris* for the *Labour Monthly*. This article, enlarged as a pamphlet (now, alas, out of print), was the first opportunity for many years that the younger generation of Socialists in Britain had had of learning that Morris was an active revolutionary, a Marxist propagandist, street-corner agitator of the highest quality, and practical organiser. Even by 1914 there was widespread in the Socialist movement what E. P. Thompson calls 'the Morris myth'*, given a wide vogue by Bruce Glasier—once an ardent follower of Morris, later a deserter from the revolutionary Socialist camp. The substance of this myth was that Morris was a remarkable craftsman, designer and poet, utopian in his ideals, removed from the realities of politics, a lover of mankind and of democracy: but that he didn't believe in the class struggle, or understand Marx's theory of value, or even remain much interested in Socialism towards the end of his life.

In passing, it should be pointed out that the generation of young Socialists who attended the Socialist Sunday Schools between 1900 and 1910 should have realised that this was a myth, since Morris' songs of the class struggle and revolution were the core of their old song-books (as indeed were some of Bruce Glasier's first verses). But even the song-books were watered down towards the end of the pre-1914 period, like much else of the intellectual equipment of British Socialism.

It is of the highest importance today to understand why this falsification of the work of Morris took place. It was part of a still wider process of decrying Marxism which only came to its full after the first world war.

By the end of the 1914-18 war the whole world was plunged into political convulsions such as no capitalist society had experienced since 1848 (except, significantly, for the Paris Commune of 1871 and the first Russian revolution of 1905-6). Britain was no exception. The ending of capitalist exploitation and the building of a new system of society—subjects with which some tens of thousands

*E. P. Thompson 'William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary' (Lawrence & Wishart, 1955. pp. 908. 50s.). See pp. 736-740.

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of Socialists, at the most, had concerned themselves between 1884 and 1914—now became a practical question in the imagination of millions of British workers, revolted by the horrors and indecencies of the imperialist war and stirred by the October Revolution in Russia. Socialism became a real issue for them; and the Labour Party leaders then hastily and for the first time introduced the word into their first programme, *Labour and the New Social Order.*

Yet the aim of the I.L.P. leaders like Macdonald and Snowden, trade union officials like Henderson, Thomas and Clynes, Fabian Society intellectuals like Sidney Webb, who now stood at the head of the Labour Party, had never (except occasionally, some of them, in their youth) been the overthrow of the capitalist system by the workers. They had for years ridiculed and denounced the Marxists for preaching it. Their ideal was that of liberalising, civilising or educating the capitalists, so as to effect a painless transition to an improved system, one of 'fair shares'. Meanwhile they wanted the working class to keep up the pressure but not to 'get out of hand'. Now there was a danger of that very thing happening. Not only had the workers of Russia taken power in 1917, but in Britain itself several old-established Socialist organisations, small in size but very active, were negotiating from the spring of 1919 onwards about forming a Communist Party, based on Marxism.

There appeared to be a real possibility that, whereas for many years the road to Socialism in Britain had been a subject of debate among a relative handful of Marxists on the one hand and theorists of opportunism on the other, the mass of the British working class itself might now be induced to settle the controversy in favour of the Marxists.

But the anti-Marxist leaders controlled the various mass organisations of British labour; and they were able to put this vast machinery to use for their own purposes. They used it among other things for propaganda against the idea that the working class could really overthrow capitalism: and to deny that, if it did so, it could build a new and better society. Instead, they began instilling into the rebellious but politically inexperienced workers who had turned away from the Liberal Party since 1914 their own old ideas about improving capitalism—and representing these ideas to the workers as the Socialism they wanted. At the same time they began using this machinery to denounce the Socialist ideas of the old pioneers of the '80's and '90's, ideas now incorporated in the programme of

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the Communist Party, as 'un-British' and 'alien to the British tradition'.

An immense confidence trick was thus played, from 1919-20 onwards, on the millions of working men and women who flocked during those years into the trade unions and the Labour Party camp. Several generations of active people in the labour movement, as a consequence, grew up firmly convinced that the 19th-century Liberalism which the Socialist pioneers used to expose was Socialism (or, 'democratic Socialism') while the Socialist propaganda and agitation of those pioneers was 'Russian communism' (or, 'totalitarianism'). The older socialists among them, who knew better, were swamped or silenced, or often driven out altogether.

Thanks in no small measure to this combination of strong-arm methods with sleight-of-hand by the leadership of the Labour Party, British capitalism was enabled to survive both the post-war crisis of 1919-22 and the world economic crisis of 1930-33: with the results that we all know. And among a crop of books and pamphlets by Ramsay Macdonald, Philip Snowden, the I.L.P. leaders and others which supplied the arguments for opportunism, Bruce Glasier's *William Morris and the Early Years of the Socialist Movement* (1921)—written to conceal the fact that Morris had fought opportunism and Liberalism during the last fifteen years of his life, and had been a staunch champion of Communism—played no unimportant part.

Indeed, a very special role in the gigantic hoax was assigned to the name of William Morris. This remarkable man, as E. P. Thompson writes (p. 841), was 'the first creative artist of major stature in the history of the world to take his stand, consciously and without shadow of compromise, with the revolutionary working class: to participate in the day-to-day work of building a Socialist movement: to put his brain and his genius at its disposal in the struggle'. Furthermore, at the time of his death all sections of the Socialist and trade union movement in Britain were under his spell: 'no British intellectual since his time has been so trusted, loved and respected among the most advanced of the workers' (p. 732). To convince the working class and its sympathisers that Morris was on the side of opportunism, not of Marxism, was for the opportunists well worth while at that time. Moreover, they were aided from the first by the capitalist class and its spokesmen—leader-writers, historians, literary men—who even in his lifetime had done their utmost to spread the legend that Morris was half-hearted in his

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socialism, inconsistent, muddle-headed or insincere: and by the fact that bourgeois writers and artists who were his sincere admirers were most of them philistines where Socialism was concerned, hated it and did not understand it.

Some of the most notable pieces of argument in Thompson's magnificent work are the sections (pp. 735-746, 754-761, 886-899) in which he examines in detail and utterly shatters, with documentary evidence at every step, the particularly notorious myths about William Morris.

But Thompson's book is of capital importance for more than this. It gives a true and vivid picture of Morris' life, of his development as artist and Socialist fighter, on the huge canvas of his time. It shows him in the Britain of his day, with its economic and political struggles and its intellectual movements. Thompson's survey of the latter is penetrating and scholarly. We see the 'Romantic Revolt' in its successive phases, inspired at first by the great French Revolution and by indignation at the horrors of early industrial capitalism at home (Wordsworth and Blake) and later by the post-1815 working class battles in Britain and national risings against tyranny in Greece, Spain and South America (Shelley, Byron, Keats). We see the background of callous contentment with the victory of the factory owners in British politics, heedless of the sufferings they inflicted on the worker, which in the 1840's aroused the anger of Carlyle and Ruskin, and in art brought the attempted flight of the Pre-Raphaelites to the Middle Ages. We see the triumph of philistinism in every walk of life, by the sixties, which we still call 'Victorianism'—but only (Socialists need often to be reminded) because Queen Victoria was the narrow-minded and vindictive mouthpiece of capitalist brutality in every sphere of material and moral life, not because all the struggles in the factories and the streets, all movements and achievements in the world of art and literature, were 'Victorian'. All these are analysed at quite considerable length in connected form and from a Socialist point of view, to show the influences which moulded William Morris in his early years. Thompson's chapters on the philistine triumph ('Only the Ledger Lives . . .'), which drove Morris to write 'The Earthly Paradise', and on the stark need which faced reformers in the '70's and '80's to go over to Socialism, breaking with their past ('The River of Fire'), at which even the boldest drew back—John Stuart Mill, Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, Swinburne, D. G. Rossetti (and Carlyle in earlier years)—leaving William Morris alone in

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making the great decision, are deeply felt and immensely stimulating. In these chapters, and generally in the first two parts of his book, Edward Thompson has provided for the first time what was essential for fully understanding Morris' evolution to Socialism (no disrespect, this, to Mackail's brilliant earlier work, hampered however, by aloofness from Morris' socialist ideas and activities). At the same time, Thompson has drawn an extremely important Marxist sketch of the history of that great epoch in English literature, the nineteenth century, adding much to the work already done by Arnold Kettle in his *Introduction to the English Novel.*

The third part of the book—two-thirds of it in volume, however—is devoted to William Morris' life as a Socialist. Its broad outlines, no doubt, the reader could piece together from other books—Morris' apprenticeship in the S.D.F., the revolt which he led against Hyndman's dictatorial methods and peculiar brand of sectarianism, the rise and fall of the Socialist League, Morris' matchless and numerous articles and Socialist verse in *The Commonweal,* his tireless activity as open-air speaker and lecturer, his final reconciliation with the S.D.F. in the last few years before his death in 1896. What could not be found elsewhere is the stirring narrative, the meticulous care which Thompson has taken to document the story, drawing upon long-forgotten and often inaccessible books, journals, minutes and private papers. These make his work a contribution to the history of British Socialism of first-rate importance. The references themselves will be of great value to other historians working on kindred subjects: all the more because the author has taken the trouble (even at the cost of lengthy digressions) to give brief sketches of the history of many minor working class organisations and biographies of early fighters in the Socialist movement with whom Morris worked.

It is worth setting down here, by the way, that at a meeting for the famous Russian Narodnik exile, Sergei Stepniak (Kravchinsky) held at Kelmscott House, Hammersmith, in 1886, William Morris 'remarked that it was from reading Stepniak's work called *Underground Russia* that he had first been led to take an active part in propagating Socialistic doctrines' (*Daily News,* March 29, 1886). Thompson does not seem to have come across this report, although he records (p. 354) that Morris was reading Stepniak's book with great interest in May, 1883, a few months after he had joined the Democratic Federation (which became the S.D.F. in 1884).

But from the beginning Morris was influencing the movement as

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well as influenced by it. Another great service which Thompson has rendered the British working class is the copious illustrations which he has drawn from Morris' articles, lectures and poems of the ideas which so enthralled Morris' contemporaries. Thousands of active members of the Labour Party, after the experiences of recent years, are wondering whether the doctrines they have heard from Attlee and Morrison, Gaitskell and the 'New Fabians' do really represent the British variety of Socialism. Let them read Edward Thompson's many-sided collection of the views of William Morris on the fundamentals of Socialism and Communism, remembering that they were the accepted opinions of the vast majority of the men and women who laid the foundations of the Socialist movement in Britain, whether they worked in the nineties for the S.D.F. or the early I.L.P., or were selling Robert Blatchford's *Merrie England*. They will discover beyond the least doubt that the work of those pioneers is being carried on by the Communist Party today, and that the Labour Party leaders have long abjured it.

What a service to the movement of today it would be to republish, in a series of small accessible books, a new selection of Morris' articles in *The Commonweal*, his *Chants of Labour* and other short Socialist poems (by no means so lacking in a 'sense of vitality in the working class' as some incautious words of Thompson's, on page 775, might suggest) and perhaps an anthology of his views on the fundamental questions of Socialist theory!

Thompson does a good deal in this respect, as already indicated, when he demonstrates that Morris was a follower of Marx and Engels, conscious and enthusiastic, even though he did not always take the latter's advice. One must pay tribute, in particular, to the care Thompson has taken in bringing out Morris' theoretical condemnation of imperialism, as well as his agitation against its ugly deeds (pp. 453-6, 459-60, 504-5, 605-6, 723-5, 794) and his sound socialist justification for denouncing the monarchy (pages 565-8). Morris' prophetic views on the possibility that some calling themselves Socialists might advocate an arrangement between the workers and the capitalists which would 'rain wages when the markets were good', but would leave the working class still exploited by the capitalists, are well illustrated (pp. 450, 505, 541-2, 666-7, 689-90, 715-7)—though it is a pity (because of peculiar aptness for today) that Thompson did not also quote the passage in the 1893 lecture on Communism in which Morris foresaw the propertied classes accepting town planning, free libraries, municipal housing and

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industry, improved education, even 'at the expense of some portion of the freedom and fortunes of the proprietary classes', for the sake of keeping capitalism alive—'the workers better treated, better organised, helping to govern themselves, but with no more pretence to equality with the rich, nor any more hope for it, than they have now.'

Perhaps less aware of the tremendous impact on the Socialist movement in this and other countries when Lenin in his *State and Revolution* re-discovered for its benefit the difference between Socialism and Communism as stages of society without capitalists—a difference recognised widely sixty years ago—Thompson does rather too little to illustrate Morris' clear thinking on this subject too, which possibly he got from his personal acquaintance with Frederick Engels. The latter, however, only published Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme,* written in 1875, with its close analysis of the lower and higher stages of Communist society, in 1891. Yet already in 1885 we find Morris writing that 'pure Communism is the logical deduction from the imperfect form of the new society, which is generally differentiated from it as Socialism' (*The Hopes of Civilisation*): in 1888 he deals with the two stages more fully, noting that in Socialist society, with the State as sole possessor of the national plant and stock, and sole employer of labour, the basis of reward would be 'the worth of productive work' done by the individual, while in Communist society the aim would be 'satisfying the needs of each member, only exacting from each that he should do his best according to his capacity' (*True and False Society*): the following year he writes that 'all genuine Socialists admit that Communism is the necessary development of Socialism' (letter to *Commonweal,* May 18, 1889): and so on to his 1893 lecture on Communism quoted by Thompson in this connection (pages 746, 797).

To mention these things is but to underline what a treasury of Socialist inspiration Edward Thompson has opened by bringing William Morris so near to the British working class movement of today. His book is one of which British Marxists and the British working class movement may indeed be proud.

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THE PARIS COMMUNE

[*By good luck a treasure trove of letters that throw a new light on the life of Marx and on events in the sixties and early seventies of last century have been discovered and have come into the possession of the Biblioteca G. G. Feltrinelli of Milan. They have been translated into Italian and edited with copious notes by Professor Giuseppe Del Bo and published in the* Movimento Operaio, No. 2, 1955. *By the kindness of Professor Armando Saitta, editor of* Movimento Operaio *we have been furnished with complete photostatic copies of the original letters. There are twenty-six in all, nine written in German by Marx's wife and seventeen in English (together with one in French) by Marx's eldest daughter Jenny. They throw light on the Irish question, on the Paris Commune, on the activity of Marx in the First International, and on the writing and translations (into French and Russian) of his* Capital. *Publication of these letters in this magazine will begin in the near future. Meantime on this 85th anniversary of the Commune of Paris, we print in this issue relevant excerpts from the years 1870 and 1871. The first two excerpts are from Jenny, the third from Mrs. Marx. We take this opportunity of expressing our indebtedness to our Italian friends Professors Saitta and Del Bo for enabling us to make these letters known in Britain.—Ed. L.M.*]

Nov. 19, 70.

IN your last letter, my dear Trautchen[1], for which I have yet to thank you & to tell you that it came to hand safe and sound, you kindly enquire after Laura & Lafargue. They left Paris before the battle of Sedan[2] had put an end to the 'ferocious farce of the Empire' & have since that time been staying at Bordeaux. Paul[3] has been very busy trying to stir up the drowsy inhabitants of Bordeaux & for that purpose published a journal entitled 'La defense Nationale'[4]. His efforts however have been thrown away & his paper has expired. The Bordelais, that bourgeois par excellence expends all his enthusiasm on money making eating & drinking & is altogether indifferent whether society is kept in order by the Prussian needle-gun or the French chassepot. His only dread, the shadow that haunts him by day & night is the Spectre rouge. Altogether all over France it appears that the ruling classes are much more anxious to exterminate the 'reds' than the 'Prussians'. According to letters from a member of the International, Gambetta[5], that 'marchand de phrases' has been doing all in his power to prevent

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the arming of the Proletariat. But he can do so no more—he has been forced to order a levy en masse. Lafargue writes us the following words with regard to that measure—

> *La levée en masse va organiser et armer toute la classe ouvrière, et comme il n'y aura aucune armée organisée à leur opposer, les ouvriers pourront sinon dicter leurs conditions, au moins avoir haute voix dans la prochaine constitution. Je crois que le choc que l'organisme bourgeois a reçu, est tellement puissant qu'à partir de ce jour sa chute en France sera des plus rapides.*[6]

Amen—say I—But alas, the shadow of the French peasant darkens this bright picture!

---

[1]Mrs. Kugelmann.

[2]The Battle of Sedan where the French Army of Louis Bonaparte suffered defeat at the hands of the Prussians on 2nd September 1870.

[3]Lafargue, Marx's son-in-law.

[4]*La Defense Nationale*, a daily paper, published for a very short time in Paris, from September 8, 1876.

[5]Gambetta, L.M. (1838-1882) French Bourgeois-Radical statesman. Member of the Provisional Government in France in 1870.

[6]The levy *en masse* will organise and arm all the working class and as there will be no other organised army to oppose them the workers will be able, if not to dictate their conditions, at least to have a strong voice in the next constitution. I believe that the blow the bourgeois system has received is so powerful that from this day its downfall in France will be very rapid.

April 18, 71.

Pardon my silence. I ought to have answered your kind letters, & *yours* in particular my dear doctor[1], long ago! However, I confess I have not had the energy even to write a letter—my courage has failed me. I cannot bear to sit quietly by, while the bravest & best are being massacred at the command of that ferocious clown Thiers[2], who notwithstanding his hordes of trained cut-throats would never conquer the undisciplined citizens of Paris, were it not for the helping hand of his Prussian allies, who seem to take pride in their role of policemen. Even the London press, which true to its honorable mission has done its utmost in calumniating the proletarians of Paris, is *now* obliged to admit that men have never struggled more bravely or boldly for a principle.

Yesterday, my dear Trautchen, I had a letter from my sister[3], which greatly alarmed us. Paul[4], you must know, had gone to Paris, in order to obtain from the Commune 'des pleins pouvoirs' to organize the revolutionary army in Bordeaux, & about a week ago he wrote to us to say that he was on his way home, where we imagined him to be, sain & sauf, until yesterday when we heard from Laura that she does not know what has become of her husband since his departure. If Paul has written to her, his letters have

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evidently been intercepted by the Versailles government, which in order to hide the doings of the Commune from the 'ruraux' or 'ruminants', as they are now called, prevents the exit from Paris of newspapers & letters. To add to Laura's distress her youngest child is dangerously ill. On receiving her letter my first impulse was at once to start for Bordeaux & (*entre nous*) I do not mind confessing, that in case of opposition on the part of my parents, I resolved to go off on the sly. Since then, I have however ascertained that the Orleans railway line has been cut off—that Picard[5] has proclaimed the country in a state of siege—that no one is allowed to go on without passport etc. Nothing now remains for me but to wait for the slow but sure conveyance by steamer & to travel according to Mohr's[6] & Staff's[7] plan.—Staff has pitched his tent in London ever since September. I thought I had written to you long ago to inform you of that fact. Mohr & he go out for long walks together, whenever Mohr's health premits it. His cough is a little better, but he is very bilious & altogether far from well. Our doctor comes to see him regularly. The present state of things causes our dear Mohr intense suffering, & no doubt is one of the chief causes of his illness. A great number of our friends are in the Commune. Some of them have already fallen victims to the butchers of Versailles. Gustave Flourens[8] was actually *murdered. He did not fall* in battle as is reported by the press, but the house in which he had his headquarters having been pointed out to some gendarmes by some spy, it was surrounded & he was assassinated. And to think that it is only a year since we walked with him to Hampstead, discussing what could be done for the Irish prisoners. The letters of O'Donovan Rossa[9] that I did not translate Flourens translated. I fancy I still hear his voice when he said—'Je vous le promets je ferai tout pour O'D. Rossa'—he was ready to give his life to liberate the Fenians.[10]

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[1]Ludwig Kugelmann (1830-1902), doctor of medicine. Intimate friend and correspondent of Marx who lived in Hanover.

[2]L. A. Thiers (1797-1877). French reactionary statesman and historian who brutally suppressed the Paris Commune.

[3]Laura Lafargue, Marx's daughter.

[4]Lafargue.

[5]E. Picard (1821-1877). Minister of the Interior in Thiers' government.

[6]Karl Marx.

[7]Frederick Engels.

[8]Gustave Flourens (1838-1871). Blanquist journalist. Active member of the International and editor of the revolutionary paper *La Rive Gauche* (1865). Perished in the Paris Commune.

[9]J. O'Donovan Rossa. One of the leaders of the Irish Fenian movement, later migrated to America.

[10]The Fenians, the Irish National Liberation movement of the 1860's and '70's. The International and Marx organised a mass solidarity campaign on its behalf.

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1 Máitland Park Road

(Undated)[1]

DEAR MR. IMANDT,[2]

I have just received your note and I hasten to say at once that Mohr is all right. Those are all police lies, which Stieber[3] now concocts with the French scoundrels. You will receive today copies of the Address of the International.[4] Perhaps you will be able to get some of it into the press. The girls[5] have been with Laura for the last six weeks. At first they were in Bordeaux, but things became too hot there for Lafargue. They hurried away from there and are now close to the Spanish border, and I hope safe. Your brother also wrote a few lines yesterday about Mohr's imprisonment; please tell him what you know. I have my hands full with things to do today.

You have no idea, dear Mr. Imandt, of the misery and rage we have gone through during these last weeks. It has taken over twenty years to develop such fine, capable, heroic men, and now they have nearly all perished. There is still hope for some of them, the best have been murdered: Varlin,[6] Jacquelard,[7] Rigault,[8] Tridon[9] etc.* The vulgar shouters of the Felix Pyat[10] variety will probably come through. Others are still in hiding, but I fear the bloodhounds will trace them yet.

Cordial greetings,

from your JENNY MARX.

*Above all, the true heroes who fought for eight days without leaders in Villette, Belleville and St. Antoine; working men and women!!

---

[1]Probably June, 1871.

[2]Peter Imandt, member of the Communist League. From 1852 living in England as a language teacher in Dundee. Friend of Marx and Engels.

[3]Wilhelm Stieber (1818-1882), director of the Prussian police. A letter from Marx to Kugelmann of June 18, 1871 says: 'You know that throughout the period of the last Paris revolution I was denounced continuously as the *grand chef de l'Internationale* by the Versailles papers (Stieber collaborating) and, by repercussion, by the press here in England'.

[4]The Address of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association, on *The Civil War in France*, by Marx, London, May 30, 1871.

[5]Jenny and Eleanor Marx. (Letter from Marx to Kugelmann, July 27, 1871).

[6]Eugène Varlin (1839-1871), founder of the Co-operative Society of Bookbinders, member of the International and of the Paris Commune; murdered in the last days of the Commune.

[7]Charles Victor Jacquelard (1841-1903), friend of Blanqui, member of the International, captain in the 17th Legion during the Commune; escaped to Switzerland.

[8]Raoul Georges Adolphe Rigault (1846-1871), Blanquist writer. Official of the Commune; murdered on May 24, 1871.

[9]Edmé Marie Gustave Tridon (1841-1871), Blanquist writer. From 1866 member of the First International. In 1870, together with Blanqui, published *La Patrie en Danger*. Member of the Commune; fled to Belgium.

[10]Felix Pyat (1810-1889). Member of the Constituent Assembly of 1848, of the Legislative Assembly of 1849 and of the Paris Commune. Emigrated to London, and conducted a campaign of slander against the General Council of the First International.

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THEY REMEMBERED THE COMMUNE

SEVENTY YEARS ago, representatives of every Socialist body came together on March 18 to honour the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Paris Commune, at the South Place Institute, London. 'This was crammed', wrote an eye-witness in the April *Commonweal*, 'before the actual proceedings began by an audience that was throughout the whole evening as enthusiastic as it was densely packed'—an audience that joined lustily 'in certain revolutionary singing'. The initiative to call together an all-embracing committee to organise the celebration had been taken by William Morris and his associates in the Socialist League. Just off the press in time for the meeting was a 24-page two-penny pamphlet *A History of the Commune*, written by William Morris and two others, 'in order in some measure to meet the blundering lies of capitalistic historians and commentators'.

For the Socialist League, Frank Kitz moved a resolution:

> That this meeting of International Revolutionary Socialists, assembled in London on the 15th Anniversary of the Commune of Paris, has met to commemorate the heroic devotion of the Parisian working-class in the spring of 1871 to the cause of the people, as embodied in that forerunner of socialised administration of the future in the Paris Commune, and to record its gratitude to those who fell in defence of freedom and the emancipation of labour. . . . Furthermore, it desires to record its abhorrence of the malicious lying of the capitalist press with reference to this struggle of the people for their own emancipation.

Then there rose a sturdy upright figure of an engineer, from the Social Democratic Federation. He was, he said, a wage-slave and the son of a wage-slave. He recognised there was no hope for his class save in such brave attempts at the inauguration of a new system as that made in 1871. He begged to second. This was Tom Mann, a youth of 15 when the world saw in Paris the first workers' State. (The same Tom Mann lived to rejoice when 61 years old at the final victory of the Russian workers, and to join the Communist Party of Great Britain when it was founded. This year the British labour movement, and not least amongst them the Amalgamated Engineering Union of which he was General Secretary, celebrate the centenary of our Tom Mann's birth.) German, Italian, Russian and French speakers were among those who followed. One of the most eloquent was Eleanor Marx, youngest daughter of the great man who had died just three years before. She reminded the audience that there was more to be done than to demonstrate on one day of the year. Speaking of the work of the women, she urged the necessity of combined and resolute work. When victory finally came 'it will be by the workers, without distinction of sex, or trade, or country, standing and fighting shoulder to shoulder against their common foe.'

The meeting ended with the singing of the Marseillaise.

ANGELA TUCKETT

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weeks no less than forty-four other publications raised prices, on an average by 3d. in the shilling. The Bevanite *Tribune* went up to 6d., and started a new drive to save circulation falling further.

What are the new factors? Here are some details of steep increases. *Printing paper* has gone up, trailing after newsprint, which soared in expectation of unbridled free-for-all in the newspaper world. (The paper L.M. uses this year has risen by 12 per cent.) There are the increases directly due to Government action. Take the new *rating* valuations, the full effect of which in extra rates payable will not be known until April. (Our valuation has doubled.) Take *postal charges* which the Government brought into effect on January 1. These hit periodicals really hard. (Postage and freight on our bulk parcels is 24 per cent up.) For subscription copies it is worse. To send out a single L.M., sealed, costs two-thirds as much again, and one-third more if unsealed. We had either to consider publishing a lighter-weight subscription copy—or charge subscribers postage. Take *telephones, electricity, gas* and *fares* —even the *messenger service*, which cost us 100 per cent more last month. All this, apart from *printing costs* which were rising long before the present dispute. Moreover, the trend continues with no end in sight —thanks to the grotesque burden of war expenditure and consequent inflation.

Thus we have to face the fact that we are dipping into the Fund instead of ear-marking it for development purposes. Hitherto we haven't kept asking for more from readers who already 'levy' themselves regularly, despite other commitments. But are there not others who might be asked to express goodwill for Labour's premier monthly with money, and so spread the burden over more people? We agree the long-term solution is to win many new readers —fast. But as yet winning new readers doesn't keep pace with the speed of rising costs. We have given you some hard facts: what do you think? January donations totalled:

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